



## Hybrid Town Meeting Study Committee

Date: February 26, 2024

Time: 7:19 PM (start time delayed due to technology problems)

Location: Town Hall Annex, Second Floor Conference Room and via Zoom

### Minutes

Attendance: Alex Bagnall, Kerrie Fallon (Zoom), Peter Gast (Zoom), Rebecca Gruber, Guillermo Hamlin (Zoom, joined meeting at 7:44), Steve Storch, Juli Brazile (Town Clerk)

1. Review and approval of minutes.
  - a. Reviewed minutes.
  - b. Approved unanimously.
2. Updates on project tasks.
  - a. Surveys
    - i. Reviewed draft surveys for 4 target populations: current Town Meeting Members (TMMs), former TMMs, TMMs that had used the remote Town Meeting room access, and non-TMMs. Focused on the survey questions asking anticipated reasons for remote TM participation, likely frequency of use of remote access, and modality of travel to Town Hall; Also discussed sequencing of questions.
    - ii. Regarding the question addressing the use of informal communication channels during Town Meeting, such usage is not believed to be of legal concern.
    - iii. Discussed mechanisms, e.g. email lists, to use for survey dissemination/publicity, and survey timing.
    - iv. Action: Surveys Task Group to provide draft surveys in near-final form for review at the next meeting.
  - b. Other towns' experience with Hybrid Town Meeting
    - i. Reviewed timing of upcoming hybrid town meetings in Lexington, Plymouth, Belmont, Burlington, and Brookline. Dedham is another possibility. Lexington's meeting, starting on March 18<sup>th</sup>, provides the nearest-term opportunity for real-time observation; other towns' meetings take place in April-June. Most towns have on-line recordings of their meetings; however, these are not expected to be as informative as in-person attendance.
  - c. Planning for observing Lexington Town Meeting

- i. Action: Guillermo will be in contact with Arlington Town Moderator Greg Christiana regarding Greg's reaching out to the Lexington moderator in order to initiate arrangements for observation of Lexington's upcoming hybrid meeting. It is desirable to observe the process and experience for both in-person TMM attendance and, if possible, remote TMM access.
    - ii. All members of the Study Committee are interested in observing/experiencing Lexington's meeting, either in-person or remotely
    - iii. Action: Once permission is obtained, Other Towns' Research Task Group to provide information to HTMSC members re: attendance at Lexington Town Meeting.
  - d. Questions for other Towns
    - i. A broad range of potential questions about hybrid meetings in other towns has been assembled. It was agreed that these will be best addressed with towns after attending an actual hybrid town meeting.
  - e. Legal landscape
    - i. There are 3 similar pending bills in the Legislature addressing hybrid town meetings.
    - ii. It does not appear that Arlington's bylaws or process per Town Meeting Time are prohibitive of the implementation of hybrid town meetings.
    - iii. Actions for Legal Landscape task group:
      - Follow up with the Arlington Town Counsel for a definitive reading on whether Town Meetings fall under the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law.
      - ☐ Generate a "checklist" of relevant key points from the pending state legislation.
      - ☐ Locate the current governing TM legislation.  
<https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleVII/Chapter43A>
- 3. Public Comment.
  - a. No members of the public were present.
- 4. New business.
  - a. Next meeting will take place on March 25, 2024.
  - b. Alex will take minutes (Peter is the back-up in case Alex's laptop is needed for meeting technical support)..

Meeting adjourned at 8:26 PM.